



August 14, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary
U.S Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Ryan McCarthy
Secretary
United States Army
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Esper and Secretary McCarthy:

The Military Coalition appreciates the Department of Defense's work to expand Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), and continued service to our military community in rendering honors at burials and inurnments. These coveted honors serve to comfort the grieving and instill pride in families who witness our nation's final respects for their loved ones.

It is because of the prestige and honor that we are compelled to share our concerns with proposed eligibility changes to ANC. The changes risk being discriminatory by service and mission, and do not account for the void of military honors for those forced to different cemeteries.

Consider the impact to a Vietnam veteran with Bronze Star for Valor, or Cold War Submariner amassing years of duty underway, bomber or missile crewmember, and many others who also risked their lives for our nation. The changes proposed will render 20-year retirees ineligible for in ground burial and the caliber of memorable military honors delivered at ANC.

Eligibility changes for burial at ANC constitute more than a solution to a math and geography problem – they will force many to alter their end of life plans; or worse, will force families to make decisions counter to previous eligibility without input from their deceased loved ones.

We acknowledge ANC is running out of room for interments. The Coalition recommends grandfathering eligibility, to account for those who are currently eligible and have already intended ANC to be their final resting place. We further recommend non-contiguous expansion to facilitate burials and inurnments – complete with military honors similar to those rendered at ANC, where such individuals had previously been eligible. We appreciate your consideration of these concerns and stand ready to work with your Departments to preserve this sacred service.

Sincerely,

Jack Du Teil
President
The Military Coalition

The Military Coalition:

Air Force Association (AFA)

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)

AMVETS (American Veterans)

Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA)

Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS)

Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)

Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Association, USCG (CWOA)

Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Service (COA)

Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)

Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)

Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America (JWV)

Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)

Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America (MCA)

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

National Military Family Association (NMFA)

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)

Non Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA)

Reserve Officers Association (ROA)

Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)

The Enlisted Association (TREA)

The Independence Fund (TIF)

United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)

USCG Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)

VetsFirst

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)